



JOHN MURTHA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 29th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

STATEMENT RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: REPRESENTATIVE JOHN MURTHA

OCTOBER 6, 2015

(608) 266-7683

Rep. Murtha Introduces Victim Advocacy Bill

Madison – Today, as part of a larger crime reform package, Representative John Murtha (R-Baldwin) introduced a victim advocacy bill that will be of great benefit to victims of sexual assault, human trafficking, and child abuse.

Specifically, the bill gives victims of those crimes the right of accompaniment by a victim advocate throughout all stages from health treatment and law enforcement proceedings to recovery. Victim advocates are trained professionals who specialize in providing emotional support as well as assisting in providing information and resources.

“Victim advocates are incredibly important,” said Murtha. “It has been shown that survivors with access to victim advocates have experienced reduced mental and physical distress as well as less physical health challenges, self-blame, guilt, and depression. It has also been found that when victim advocates are present in the process, there has been increased offender accountability. I would like to thank an organization in Menomonie, The Bridge to Hope, which brought this to my attention.”

“According to the U.S. Department of Justice’s National Crime Victimization Survey, there are about 293,066 victims of sexual assault every year in the United States. If you do the math, that comes out to one sexual assault every 107 seconds. We need to do our part in making sure these victims get the assistance they need. I cannot imagine the mental and physical toll an entire sexual assault investigation takes on a victim,” said Murtha. “They shouldn’t have to go through it alone. They deserve the right to a victim advocate.”

The bill, which was introduced with Senator Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay), has been supported and promoted by the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault and by Attorney General Brad Schimel. Schimel had this to say: “It is time for us to recognize the need to provide stronger tools to address these crimes and the legislation and resources we are announcing today will help Wisconsin do the best it can.”

This bill is now open for co-sponsorship. Murtha is hopeful it will pass both houses of the legislature by the end of the year.

###